

1 WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

2 1. An internet customer access system comprising:
3 a redirect receiving unit for generating a request
4 for a capacity determination for a web site;
5 a capacity determination unit for determining if the
6 web site has capacity to handle an additional customer;
7 a notification unit for notifying the customer if
8 the web site currently has insufficient capacity; and
9 a redirect unit for redirecting the customer to the
10 web site if sufficient capacity is found.

1 2. The internet customer access system of claim 1,
2 wherein the notification unit comprises a scheduling
3 processor for scheduling access of the customer to the
4 web site.

1 3. The internet customer access system of claim 2,
2 further comprising a customer identification unit for
3 determining whether a customer has scheduled access to a
4 web site.

1 4. The internet customer access system of claim 2,
2 wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for
3 attaching a tag to the customer system.

1 5. The internet customer access system of Claim 4,
2 wherein the tag comprises an encrypted cookie.

1 6. The internet customer access system of claim 4,
2 wherein the customer identification unit comprises means
3 for detecting the tag on the customer system and means
4 for removing the tag from the customer system.

1 7. The internet customer access system of claim 3,
2 wherein the notification unit comprises an update
3 processor for informing a customer access system already
4 possessing a tag of current accessibility status.

1 8. The internet customer access system of claim 2,
2 wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for
3 providing appointment slots.

1 9. The internet customer access system of claim 3,
2 wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for
3 providing the customer with a position in a queue and
4 means for providing an estimated service time.

1 10. The internet customer access system of claim 9,
2 wherein the notification unit comprises means for
3 providing a customer with an updated place in the queue.

1 11. The internet customer access system of claim 1,
2 wherein the notification unit comprises means for
3 notifying a customer that the site is full.

1 12. The internet customer access system of claim 1,
2 wherein the notification unit comprises means for
3 notifying a customer that replay options are available.

1 13. An internet customer access system comprising:
2 a capacity determination unit for determining if the
3 web site has the capacity to handle an additional
4 customer;

5 a scheduling processor for scheduling access of the
6 customer to the web site if the capacity determination
7 unit indicates that no current capacity exists; and

8 a customer identification unit for determining
9 whether the customer has scheduled access to the web
10 site.

1 14. The internet customer access system of claim
2 13, wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for
3 attaching a tag to a customer system.

1 15. The internet customer access system of 14,
2 wherein the tag is an encrypted cookie.

1 16. The internet customer access system of claim
2 15, wherein the customer identification unit comprises
3 means for detecting the encrypted cookie on the customer
4 system and means for removing the encrypted cookie from
5 the customer system.

1 17. The internet customer access system of claim
2 14, further comprising a notification unit having an
3 update processor for informing a customer access system
4 already possessing a tag of current accessibility status.

1 18. The internet customer access system of claim
2 14, wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for
3 providing appointment slots.

1 19. The internet customer access system of claim
2 14, wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for
3 providing the customer with a position in a queue and
4 means for providing an estimated service time.

1 20. The internet customer access system of claim
2 13, further comprising a notification unit having means
3 for notifying a customer that the site is full.

1 21. A method for regulating access to a web site,
2 the method comprising the steps of:

3 receiving a web site access request;
4 determining whether the web site has sufficient
5 capacity to accommodate a customer;
6 redirecting the customer to the web site if
7 sufficient capacity is found; and
8 notifying the customer if insufficient capacity is
9 found.

1 22. The method of claim 21, comprising notifying
2 the customer that replay options are available.

1 23. The method of claim 21, further comprising
2 determining whether the customer has a tag.

1 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising
2 determining whether the tag is valid.

1 25. The method of claim 24, further comprising
2 redirecting the customer to the web site if the tag is
3 valid.

1 26. The method of claim 23, further comprising
2 determining if the tag is expired.

1 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising
2 performing scheduling operations if the tag is expired

3 and providing the customer with an updated status if the
4 cookie is not expired.

1 28. The method of claim 21, wherein redirecting the
2 customer to the web site comprises the steps of
3 determining if the customer has a tag and removing the
4 tag if present.

1 29. The method of claim 21, further comprising
2 scheduling customer access if insufficient capacity is
3 found.

1 30. The method of claim 29, wherein scheduling
2 comprises providing the customer with a position in a
3 queue.

1 31. The method of claim 29, wherein scheduling
2 comprises providing the customer with an appointment.

1 32. The method of claim 29, wherein scheduling
2 comprises leaving a tag on the customer system and
3 providing the customer with a finite time for which the
4 tag is valid.

1 33. The method of claim 29, further comprising
2 determining whether a visitor has previously scheduled
3 access to the web site.

1 34. The method of claim 33, further comprising
2 providing a customer with updated position information.

1 35. The method of claim 33, further comprising
2 offering a cancellation and rescheduling option upon
3 providing updated position information.

1 36. A method for regulating access to a web site,
2 the method comprising the steps of:

3 determining if the web site has sufficient capacity
4 to handle a customer;

5 scheduling access of the customer to the web site if
6 insufficient capacity is found;

7 determining whether a customer has previously
8 scheduled access to the web site.

1 37. The method of claim 36, wherein scheduling
2 access comprises scheduling an appointment for the
3 customer.

1 38. The method of claim 36, wherein scheduling
2 access comprises assigning the customer a position in a
3 queue.

1 39. The method of claim 36, wherein scheduling
2 access comprises providing the customer with a tag.

1 40. The method of claim 36, further comprising
2 redirecting the customer to the web site if sufficient
3 capacity is found.

1 41. The method of claim 36, wherein determining
2 whether a customer has previously scheduled access to the
3 web site comprises determining whether a customer has a
4 tag.

1 42. The method of claim 41, further comprising
2 redirecting the customer to the web site if the tag is
3 valid.

1 43. The method of claim 42, further comprising
2 performing scheduling operations if the tag is expired.

1 44. The method of claim 43, further comprising
2 performing update processing if the tag is not yet valid
3 and is not yet expired.